

IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT
FOR THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND AND NEWCASTLE

IN THE MATTER OF)	ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
)	
Emergency Response to the)	NO. 2021-02
Threat of Public Health by COVID-19)	

This matter comes before the Court on the public health emergency in King County, State of Washington;

WHEREAS, the Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court continues to operate under a State of Emergency due to the continuing COVID-19 health pandemic;

WHEREAS, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is highly contagious and the implementation of protective measures have necessitated changes to Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court operations;

WHEREAS, Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court recognizes the essential nature of court operations and the importance of ensuring access to courts during this health pandemic and has implemented safety measures and procedures as recommended by the Washington State Department of Public Health, infectious disease experts, and other public health officials to continue its operations while mitigating the risk to Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court staff and all court users;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Washington State Department of Health Guidelines regarding court safety protocol and operations, courts are encouraged to also consider the Governor's current guidelines and other relevant public health information when making their independent operational decisions;

WHEREAS, holding in-person jury trials brings larger groups of people into a courthouse which can contribute to the spread of the virus, therefore additional temporary measures are needed to protect the health of jurors, staff, and other court users until such time as the court can reasonably assure the safety of all courthouse occupants based on established safety guidelines and protocols;

WHEREAS, the health pandemic and necessary safety protocols continue to significantly impact Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court operations, staffing, and courtroom and calendar capacity. The prolonged duration of the current health emergency has also negatively impacted financial and other court resources necessitating further reductions and suspensions of valuable court programs and calendars;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby ORDERED:

1. Criminal Jury Trials:

Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court is suspending in-person jury selection and conducting of criminal jury trials through December 31, 2021, and will continue to assess the suspension period on a bi-weekly basis. The bi-weekly evaluation could result in a further extension of the suspension as conditions warrant.

The increase in the spread of the virus is an unavoidable circumstance that necessitates the exclusion of any suspension period from speedy trial calculations until such time as a jury trial can safely be conducted consistent with CrRLJ 3.3.

Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court will continue all other calendar operations as currently scheduled whenever possible and appropriate.


2. Strict Enforcement of Safety Protocol for all In-Person appearances:

All in-person hearings shall be conducted in accordance with Washington State Department of Health guidelines and Orders of the Washington State Supreme Court. All persons entering or remaining in any Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court location must strictly comply with all Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court safety protocols as previously ordered or hereafter amended, including the wearing of appropriate facial coverings and strict compliance with social distancing requirements and markings. Anyone who is ill or feeling ill, or who is caring for someone who is ill, or who has had recent close contact with someone who is confirmed to have contracted the COVID virus, should stay home and call the court at 206-275-7604 to reschedule your court date.

3. Application of Prior Mercer Island and Newcastle Municipal Court Emergency Orders:

Unless otherwise specified herein or subsequently amended by further Order of the Court, this Order continues in effect through December 31, 2021, and may be amended as circumstances warrant.

DATED this 31 day of August, 2021.



Presiding Judge
WAYNE STEWART